

Wishful Images

When Microhistories Take Form

Exhibition Guide

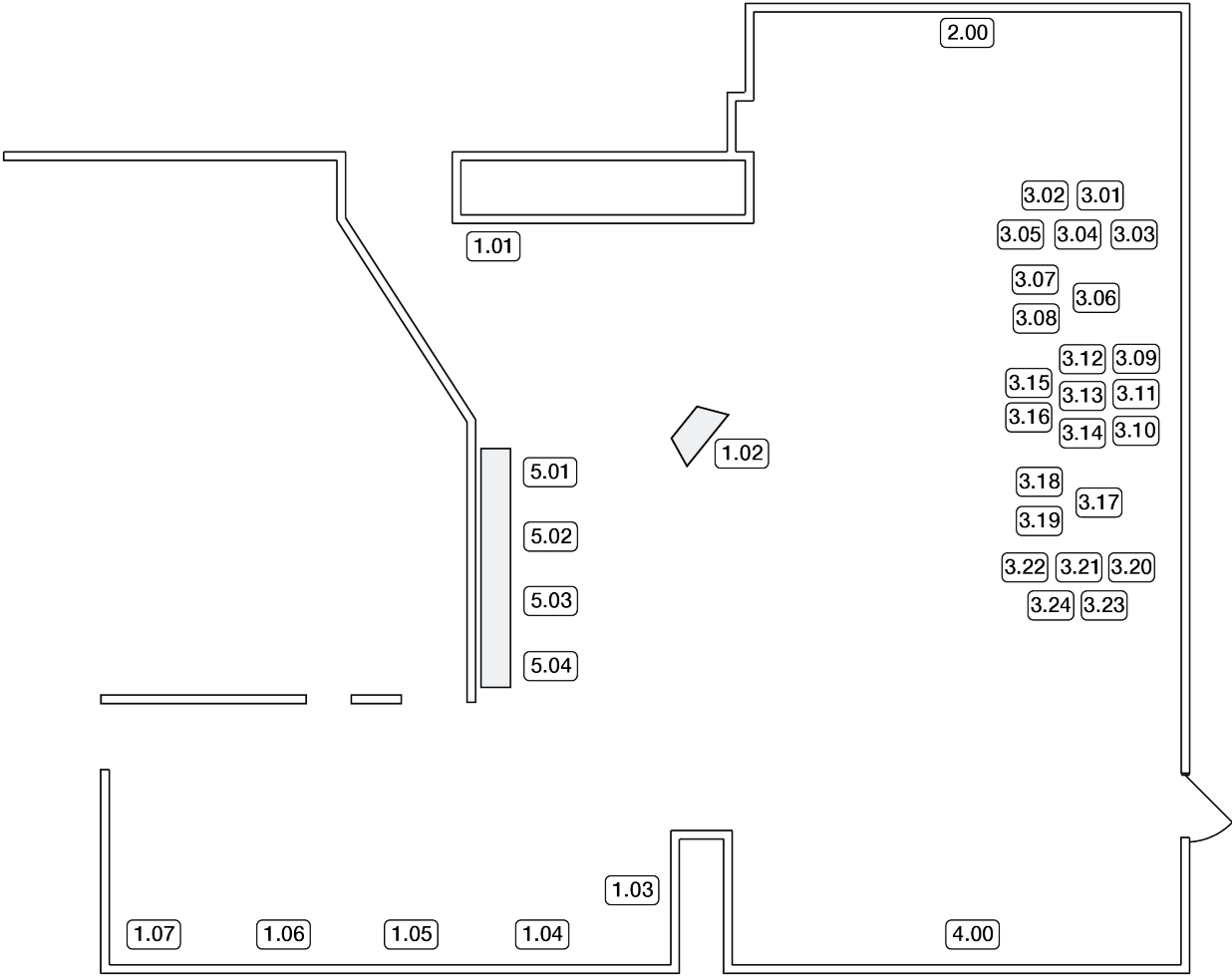
Wishful Images: When Microhistories Take Form situates its point of inquiry around the Koza Riots which took place in 1970 at the then-American occupied Okinawa. Triggered by a car accident when an American-owned automobile injured a native Okinawan, tensions and anger which had accumulated over the twenty-five-years of American occupation reached its tipping point and turned into six hours of riots in the camp town Koza near the Kadena Air Force Base. Similar to numerous lived experiences of its time, the residues of the Koza Riots are neglected by official histories and are gradually diminishing from collective memory. By positioning itself alongside the accounts of microhistories, *Wishful Images* is an exhibition that relates lesser-known historical events through the persistent efforts of artists, recounted and re-articulated in various forms and mediums. Taking its cue from Ernst Bloch's concept of wishful images, the exhibition explores a constellation of unrealised possibilities, in which history, image, and politics triangulate. Common to these five presented works is a geopolitical reality that can be recapitulated under the Asian Cold War – a re-historicisation of the past in the present with a regional specificity.

Presenting a dialogue between these micro-historical moments, their significant legacies are illuminated once again as embodied experiences in this present moment where Singapore celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of its official involvement at the 1970 Lusaka Conference which expanded the aims of the Non-Aligned Movement. The five artistic projects of *Wishful Images* each embody a stream of socio-political undercurrents particular to their circumstances, while collectively present a historical conjuncture that still lingers in our present-day power structures.

Introduction

Okinawan journalistic photographer Kuniyoshi Kazuo's photographs shot between the late 1960s to early 1970s are eyewitnesses of a historical intimacy represented by demands for equability shared by both local Okinawans and African American military personnel; the former characterised by the day-to-day movements amidst the Koza Riots, while the latter exemplified by scenes of Martin Luther King's memorial march, and racial segregations within Koza. Reverberating with Kuniyoshi's eye of history is Okinawa-born American artist Aya-Rodriguez Izumi's *Okinawa Tragedy: Echoes from the Last Battle of WWII*. Together with her Okinawan mother Noriko, they narrate a lyricism of solidarity by revisiting her father José Rodríguez's artistic attempt to document and preserve a silenced mass killing conducted by American and Japanese militaries in the last battle of the Pacific War on Okinawa.

On the other hand, Kao Chung-Li and Nguyen Trinh Thi's single channel videos respectively reveal an ideological struggle shared by opposing sides of the Cold War. Kao's *My Mentor* Chen Yingzhen depicts the life of socialist thinker Chen Ying-Zhen in pro-American Taiwan governed by democratic capitalism; Nguyen's *Eleven Men* projects a survey of actress Nhu Quỳnh's career under the communist regime of Vietnam. If the featured projects of *Wishful Images* represent the normalisation of structural violence through various experiences of the Cold War, Lucy Davis' woodblock collages and the animation film *Jalan Jati*, however, are a similar kind of struggling whisper under the circumstances of colonial capitalism that is rendered audible only through a non-human perspective. In conjunction with the presented artworks is Okinawan poet Kawamitsu Shinichi's 'Social Constitution of the Republic of Ryukyu, Plan C - A Theoretical Proposal' on the gallery wall. Published in 1981, Kawamitsu's poem, written in the form of a constitution, is both a documentation of neo-imperialistic callousness towards Okinawan life in the post-World War era, and a radical wish in lyrical mode singing towards a utopian future. Epitomised by the presence of Kawamitsu's poetry, *Wishful Images: When Microhistories Take Form* explores the crystallisation of hope as an aesthetic inquiry where its imagery projects a ceaseless anticipation for a better future by intimately embedding itself within a lived past that has no names in history.





- 1.01 These two boxes of assorted timber samples with the Malay names of trees punched into each block, formerly belonged to the Botany department of the University of Malaya, which became the National University of Singapore. They were kindly donated to the Migrant Ecologies Project by the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum.



1.02

Lucy Davis
Jalan Jati (Teak Road)
2012, Singapore
23 minutes, Film



1.03

Lucy Davis

Kerusi meranti

2009, Singapore

105 x 75 cm

Assembled prints of found meranti chair with mixed ink and paper



1.04

Lucy Davis

Chinese chair tree; Meranti/Shorea

Leprosula

2009, Singapore

150 x 213 cm

Assembled prints of found, Chinese chair with mixed ink and paper



1.05

Lucy Davis

'I don't remember this photograph being taken! The only time I remember going to my Dad's factories was when I was a teenager. He asked me to paint the ends of the wood to protect them from getting cracked. I used blue paint as we use colours to indicate which wood belongs to which buyer. [But]... after less than 2 hours I told him it was impossible. I said "I'm tired, I really cannot do it!"... It was so hot! The sun was terrible!'

2014, Singapore

Reproduction of a photo of timber merchant Simon Oei as a child in the 1970's standing in the grounds of P. Bork A/S International, Kranji, where his father Allen Oei was employed.

Reproduced in prints of one of the last logs from Burma to be imported to Singapore after a 31 March 2013 log export ban.

220 cm x 150 cm

Collage on Paper



1.06

Lucy Davis

*Teak table and Chinese clan collection box
tree; Jati/Tectona grandis*

2009, Singapore

150 x 237 cm

Assembled prints of found, teak objects
with mixed ink and paper



1.07

Lucy Davis

Meja jati tiga kaki

2009, Singapore

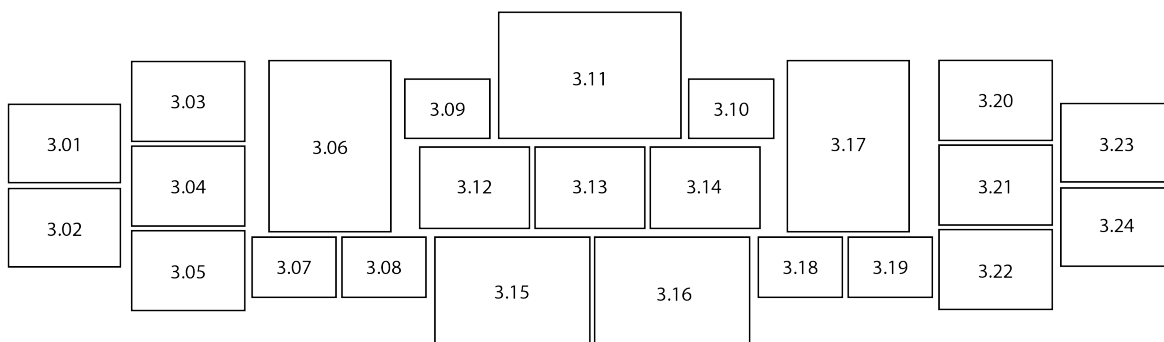
105 x 75 cm

Assembled prints of found teak table legs
with mixed ink and paper



2.00

Kao Chung-Li
My Mentor, Chen Yingzhen
 2010, Taiwan
 27 minutes, Video





3.01

Kuniyoshi Kazuo

*Koza Riot. US airforce protecting gate #2 at
Kadena Airbase
1970, Okinawa
Photograph*



3.02

Kuniyoshi Kazuo

*Koza Riot
1970, Okinawa
Photograph*



3.03

Kuniyoshi Kazuo

*Automobiles belonging to US military burnt
out in Koza Riot
1970, Okinawa
Photograph*



3.04

Kuniyoshi Kazuo

*MP [Military Police] automobiles burnt in
Koza Riot
1970, Okinawa
Photograph*



3.05

Kuniyoshi Kazuo

*US military guards sit down exhausted after
Koza Riot
1970, Okinawa
Photograph*



3.06

Kuniyoshi Kazuo

Koza Riot. Okinawa's Boy

1970, Okinawa

Photograph



3.07

Kuniyoshi Kazuo

Automobiles belonging to US military burnt out in Koza Riot

1970, Okinawa

Photograph



3.08

Kuniyoshi Kazuo

Automobiles belonging to US military burnt out in Koza Riot

1970, Okinawa

Photograph



3.09

Kuniyoshi Kazuo

Automobiles belonging to US military burnt out in Koza Riot

1970, Okinawa

Photograph



3.10

Kuniyoshi Kazuo

Automobiles belonging to US military burnt out in Koza Riot

1970, Okinawa

Photograph



3.11

Kuniyoshi Kazuo

In between US and Japan

1972, Okinawa

Photograph



3.12

Kuniyoshi Kazuo

Demo in support of all base workers fight by Afro-Americans

1970-71, Okinawa

Photograph



3.13

Kuniyoshi Kazuo

Afro-American black people who participated in memorial for priest Martin Luther [King] and Kennedy's brothers' [JFK & RFK]

1970-71, Okinawa

Photograph



3.14

Kuniyoshi Kazuo

Demo in support of Okinawa anti-base movement by Americans against war

1970-71, Okinawa

Photograph



3.15

Kuniyoshi Kazuo

B-52 strategic bomber. 100+ bombers permanently stationed during North Vietnam raids

1970, Okinawa

Photograph



3.16

Kuniyoshi Kazuo

B-52 strategic bomber. 100+ bombers permanently stationed during North Vietnam raids

1970, Okinawa

Photograph



3.17

Kuniyoshi Kazuo

Two jukebox ladies

1978, Okinawa

Photograph



3.18

Kuniyoshi Kazuo

Near Goya Crossing the day after Koza Riot

1970, Okinawa

Photograph



3.19

Kuniyoshi Kazuo

Automobiles belonging to US base burnt out in Koza Riot

1970, Okinawa

Photograph



3.20

Kuniyoshi Kazuo

Terua, Koza City was called by the nickname "Black People's Town."

(Kokujingai)

1971, Okinawa

Photograph



3.21

Kuniyoshi Kazuo

African-American military personnel in memorial march for Martin Luther [King] and Kennedy brothers' [JFK & RFK]

1970-1, Okinawa

Photograph



3.22

Kuniyoshi Kazuo

African-American GI's spirits elevate towards the camera in Black People's Town (Kokujingai)

1970-1, Okinawa

Photograph



3.23

Kuniyoshi Kazuo

Americans against war distribute leaflets through the fence to appeal for support

1970-1, Okinawa

Photograph



3.24

Kuniyoshi Kazuo

[Okinawa] Residents surround at a distance to look at automobiles burnt out in Koza Riot

1970, Okinawa

Photograph



4.00

Nguyễn Trinh Thi
Eleven Men
2016, Vietnam
28 minutes, HD Video



The project is overseen by Aya Rodríguez-Izumi,
daughter of artist, José Rodríguez.

Aya Rodríguez-Izumi
Okinawa's Tragedy: Echos From the Last Battle of WWII
2020, New York
Installation, Reproduction of Prints, Audio, and Text
Narrators: Aya Rodríguez-Izumi, José Rodríguez,
and Noriko Rodríguez



5.01

José Rodríguez

An Angel in Hell

1986, Okinawa

59.4 x 84.1 cm

Reproduction of the Original Print on Washi Paper



5.02

José Rodríguez

The Zamami Story

1986, Okinawa

59.4 x 84.1 cm

Reproduction of the Original Print on Washi Paper



5.03

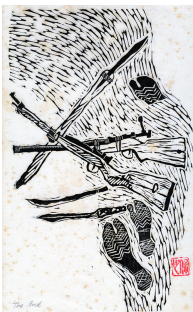
José Rodríguez

If I Perish at Sea

1986, Okinawa

59.4 x 84.1 cm

Reproduction of the Original Print on Washi Paper



5.04

José Rodríguez

The End

1986, Okinawa

59.4 x 84.1 cm

Reproduction of the Original Print on Washi Paper